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RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0398
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DEPT FOR CA/FPP AND CA/VO/F/P
POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [KFRD](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS WORKER VISA FRAUD: MONKS, PRIESTS, NUNS AND THE
PEOPLE WHO IMPERSONATE THEM

REF: A. 04 CALCUTTA 000451
[1](#)B. 06 CALCUTTA 000237

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Post refused nearly 60% of all applicants seeking to obtain R-1 religious worker visas in CY 2007. To validate those adjudications and verify the bona fides of religious institutions in Post's consular district, the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) visited or attempted to visit over a dozen purported Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples in the Indian States of Sikkim and West Bengal. Using the fraud visit information, LexisNexis searches, the internet at large, and other tools, Post was able to confirm mala fide intent and verify bona fide institutions. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In CY 2007, Post adjudicated 240 R-1 visas and refused over 65%. In addition, Post refused 50% of the 24 R-2 visa applications. These numbers reflect a consistent trend in refusal percentages for the last five years.

[1](#)3. (U) Post has a unique blend of religious applicant sources in its district: the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has its world headquarters in the West Bengal city of Mayapur; Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity are headquartered in central Kolkata, and Buddhist monasteries dot the hills of the Indian states of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and northern West Bengal, while the city of Bodhgaya in Bihar represents the physical location where Buddha attained enlightenment. Post's R-1/R-2 applicant pool is roughly one quarter Hindu, one quarter Buddhist, one quarter Catholic, and a quarter split between Sikhs, Protestants, and Muslims. The Hindu sects are also well defined and include, among others, Ananda Marga and ISKCON.

GOOD MONK, BAD MONK: BUDDHIST FRAUD

[1](#)4. (SBU) Post issued visas to less than 20% of the "Tibetan monks" that presented themselves for R-1 visas in CY 2007. Most of the refusals were to individuals in their 20s applying in groups, while issuances tended towards those 50 years and older applying either individually or with a single younger assistant. Fraud involving applicants masquerading as legitimate Buddhist

monks originates from many places, including both the U.S. and India.

15. (SBU) In some cases, the fraud originated solely from the applicants themselves, without any further collusion from anyone outside of India. For example, three applying "monks" (CLC 2007135 758 1 / 757 1 / 756 1) all had prior Cat 1 and Cat 2 CLASS records related to fraudulent passports. One applied on a passport stolen from the Government of Nepal before issuance and subsequently declared null and void. The second had a hit for traveling on an altered passport, which was reported at a regional fraud conference in Singapore. The third had previously tried to travel on a forged Nepali passport and New Delhi had entered a Cat 1 hit.

16. (SBU) In other cases, the applicants were complicit with sources outside of India. In case CLC 2007 135 758 1, four "monks" applied to attend a program in San Jose, CA. They had elaborate documents that had been patterned on legitimate documents previously sent from the U.S. A website provided on the invitation letter (www.sjbcb.com) had detailed information on the program being proposed. However, the website appears solely and explicitly created for the visa application. A search for WHOIS information on <http://www.networksolutions.com/whois/index.js> showed that the fraudulent website had been registered from Singapore just days before the visa interview. A Google search for the U.S. organization revealed the true, more detailed homepage for the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin (www.sjbetsuin.com.)

17. (SBU) The most complex and difficult to untangle cases involved fraud originating in the U.S. One such example included the cases involving the Land of Compassion Buddha. Two groups of several monks applied for a sponsored tour of the U.S, CLC 2007337 228 1-4 and CLC 2007 331 863 1-2. The supporting

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packets were identical except for minor changes to the names of the Indian organizations and the dates of the tour in the U.S. The signature of L. Chen on the U.S. invites appeared forged. The documents, however, were in good American English and otherwise appeared to be flawless.

18. (SBU) Post conducted a field fraud investigation in the Indian state of Sikkim from October 12-17, 2007. The FPU spoke with representatives of monasteries from which applicants claimed to have come. Almost universally, monastery officials were shocked that someone had appropriated or forged their letterhead for mala fide purposes. In all cases, Post collected letterhead and signature exemplars for later use and encouraged organizations to call ahead when sending bona fide applicants. Post visited five monasteries and verified that two monasteries did not exist at all. Post maintains and can share several extensive lists of monasteries and the names and appointment dates for their respective abbots.

HINDU SECTS AND FAKE PRIESTS

19. (U) Hindu priests come in many varieties. The primary problem for Post is that basic cooks and maintenance men who hold no real authority in their respective sects apply for religious worker visas. Post does not feel that these applicants meet the FAM requirements for R-1 visas, even if they intended to honestly execute the described duties. Usually applicants had no more than a passing understanding of the rites of Hinduism and, in many cases, were part of an organized and U.S.-centric smuggling operation.

110. (SBU) Post maintains one nominally Hindu organization in CCD's watchphrase tool: the cunning and adaptive Gaudiya Vaisnava Society (GVS), also known as the Sri Ram Temple, in Milwaukee, WI. The organization was founded by former R-1 visa holder and current Lexus driving legal permanent resident (LPR) Hari Gopal Das a.k.a Sudarshan Halder. DHS/ICE conducted a

compliance check of the organization in June 2007 and reported that the "temple" looked like a boarding house. Post previously conducted an investigation of the organization in West Bengal and found that the temple was a simple residential house with no religious connection or adornment. GVS has several authentic American documents obtained under false pretenses, including proclamations from city, state, and federal office holders and government organizations. It has successfully used the ruse of an R-1 visa holding injured priest to justify additional visa issuances. That priest supposedly has tuberculosis in his knee and is unable to continue his duties during treatment. Throughout 2007 all Posts in India received applications for R-1 and R-2 visas from this organization, many of them were issued.

¶11. (U) In April 2007, Post conducted a fraud investigation in Mayapur, West Bengal to catalogue and verify the existence various temples of the Vaisnava sect of Hinduism. Post linked the sixteen applicants purportedly from Krishna Balaram Mandir (which turned out to be a house in a village with nothing religious about it but a sign out front) to the Sri Ram Society using information from the local post office. Post also contacted the CEO of the ISKCON temple in Mayapur and confirmed previously established procedures for verifying bona fide ISKCON applicants. A large and legitimate branch of ISKCON also operates out of Kolkata.

SIKH PRIESTS OR INTENDING IMMIGRANTS

¶12. (SBU) Among Sikh "priests" seeking R-1 visas, Post refused over 90% of the applicants. In almost every case, applicants had no claim to residency within Post's consular district. These applicants usually came in pairs of three and had no connections or assistance from the U.S. In one case, CLC 2007 323 392 1, the applicants submitted supporting documents on A4 size paper - alleged from the U.S. - with ink imprint stamps that spelled the destination city of Upper Darby as "Upper

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Qarby" and the local Citizen's Bank as "Cnizen's Bank." Equally far-fetched submissions marked this type of application, including unfolded A4 invite letters that were alleged by the applicants to have fit into a business sized envelope (CLC 2007 082 521 1). Careful review of invitation letters and supporting financial documents was usually sufficient to mark these invariably out-of-district cases as fraudulent.

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS

¶13. (U) Post's Catholic applicants came in one of two varieties: nuns from Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity and priests from Catholic parishes across the district. Their supporting documents were always inclusive and the strict hierarchy of the church made impersonation difficult and imposters rare. Well established procedures and paperwork accompany applicants from the Missionaries of Charity; and applicants are accompanied to their interview by a senior administrator at the organization. Post encountered no Catholic-centric fraud in CY 2007.

¶14. (U) Protestant applicants applied for a variety of programs. Some programs and "priests" were not bona fide. Protestant applicants came predominately from the northeastern states where poverty is exceptionally widespread. It was not unusual for applicants to present a story of a traveling missionary they met many years ago who has invited them to preach at a local American church. Return checks bear out the truthfulness of many of these stories; most of which would be quickly refused 214(b) if there were no religious aspect to them.

TACTICS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

¶15. (SBU) Post uses comprehensive methods to verify the bona fides of U.S. religious organizations and the signatures on invitation letters. These include using PIERS records to compare American passport application signatures with invitation letter signatures, and using LexisNexis to verify the existence and whereabouts of American-based sponsors. The verification of India-based organizations, supporting websites, and all documents purporting to support a religious application are a critical part of all R-1 and R-2 adjudications.
JARDINE